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## Wilson "Snowflake" Bentley, Photographer 1865–1931

Francis Lunney

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**Wilson “Snowflake” Bentley, Photographer  
1865–1931**

He catches snowflakes in a velvet box,  
in a forest of yellow birch and sugar maple,  
  
lungs filled with gathering cold. The tripod legs  
of his giant camera break the ice. A crow calls  
  
as the first flakes drift. He lifts crystals with a feather  
onto a glass microscope slide, adjusts the pulse of knobs  
  
and dials. He experiments with the camera: the smallest aperture,  
long exposures. Nature’s designs come into focus:  
  
hexagonal arms, dendrite stars. Jewels never seen before.  
Perfect symmetry—its own miracle. What is delicate  
  
quickly melts away. Summer nights, he hangs a bed sheet  
on a neighbor’s clothesline, projects slides of winter’s beauty  
  
for the children of Jericho.

*Francis Lunnery*

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FRANCIS LUNNEY’S poems have appeared in *Outside Bozeman*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Salamander*, and *Blueline*. One of his poems is part of the Poetry in the Park installation at Edmands Park in Newton, Massachusetts. He also had a poem aired on WCAI’s (Cape Cod’s NPR station) *Poetry Sunday* program. He currently lives in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where he works as a reading specialist.